

Testimony
Daria Smith, Executive Director, CT State Independent Living Council
Appropriations Committee
Thursday, February 16, 2017, 4:30 p.m.

My name is Daria Smith and I'm the Executive Director of the Connecticut State Independent Living Council, a statewide planning agency that works in partnership with the Centers for Independent Living. And, on behalf of the CT State Independent Living Council board of directors, we vehemently oppose the Governor's budget proposal to once again eliminate state funding for the five Centers for Independent Living.

The Centers for Independent Living are the foundation of independent living services for people with disabilities in CT and working with consumers to:

- Develop lifelong independent living skills;
- Find and maintain housing in their community;
- Develop job readiness skills and accessing employment;
- Transition out of nursing facilities through Money Follows the Person (MFP) and other ILC programs.
- Gain access to services that prevent the need for placement in a nursing facility;
- Connect to appropriate technology to support independent living;
- Access health care & community supports, recreation, transportation and other resources, and services that promote independence;
- Get benefits counseling;
- Work with youth to transition from high school to employment or school;
- Advocate for themselves and others.

The SILC recently commissioned a study, using a national recognized Independent Living funding formula created by a group of economist from Indiana School of Business, to look at the cost of fully funding Independent Living in CT. The formula calls for \$5.6 million to fund the CT system. Although we know that this funding is not achievable currently, this number gives a figure, with objective data from the US Census, to work toward achieving.

Through the current nursing home transition program, the CILs save the state over \$10.3 million. With additional funds or more specifically with the \$529,000 funding level of 4 years ago restored, the CILs could continue to save the state funds. It is a simple equation. If we support the Centers, they will continue to save money.

A 100% reduction in the state funds has a significant and detrimental ripple effect. Not only will the cuts impact services to hundreds of people with disabilities annually, it will also significantly limit the ability to fully implement other programs and services directly related to nursing home transition, aging and disability resources, housing assistance, pre-employment services, transition and transportation, all of which ultimately save the state money and assist people with disabilities to fully participate in the community, work force and life.

I urge the Legislature to fully restore full funding for the Centers for Independent Living so that people with disabilities can continue to live, work and thrive independently.